

**Council on Human Rights  
Wednesday, July 21, 2004  
Council's Boardroom, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Pocahontas Building**

**Council Members Present:** Jon D. Strother, Chairman; Christopher Peace, Vice Chairman; Charles Baugham; Douglas Boulter; Tom Knox; Maria Lopez-Otin; and Jagdish Singh.

**Staff Present:** Rita R. Henderson, Director; Sandra D. Norman, Assistant Director; Gerald Snead, EEO Manager; and Timothy Wilson, Administration/Operations Manager.

**Council's Attorney Present:** Guy Horsely, Senior Assistant Attorney General

**Introductions and Welcome**

The Chairman opened the meeting, greeted everyone and then introduced Rev. Charles Baugham, one of the two (2) newly appointed members. Following Rev. Baugham's brief remarks about his prior experiences, board members and staff introduced themselves to him.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the February 13, 2004 meeting were adopted with corrections.

**Director's Report**

The Director extended greetings and offered regrets on behalf of the other new board member, Dr. Leslie Teets. The Director then reminded the board that during its last meeting, the General Assembly was in session and that the session was extended. The thrust of this year's session centered around taxes. The Council on Human Rights (CHR) was granted one (1) full-time position in the budget bill. As a result, CHR was able to recall Timothy Wilson into the position of Administration/Operations Manager.

The Director recognized and congratulated Member Singh who will be honored on August 28, 2004 as "Woman of the Year" by the Hampton Roads Chapter of the Islamic Political Party of America. Vice Chairman Peace was congratulated on his recent marriage and his selection as a member of the 2004 Leadership Metro Richmond class. She introduced two (2) senior high school students who were working as interns in CHR's office during the months of June, July, and August. These interns were sponsored by the City of Richmond's Summer Youth Program. The interns were recognized for their extraordinary talents and for going beyond the call of duty to assist staff with indexing intake files and processing 212 forms. The agency also benefited from the work of two (2) college interns who assisted the agency during the spring months.

The Director gave an overview of two (2) training conferences that staff and board attended. The first training session was sponsored by the Virginia Association of Human Rights Commissions (VAHRC) in partnership with CHR and was held on June 11-12, 2004 in Virginia Beach. Member Knox, Sandy Norman, and Rita Henderson attended the conference on Saturday, June 12<sup>th</sup> and Member Knox gave greetings on behalf of the Council during the morning session. The Director gave a presentation about the work of CHR during the evening session of the conference. Several resolutions were adopted. One key resolution that was adopted directed the association to partner with CHR to seek out new opportunities to create human rights commissions throughout the Commonwealth. Participants also passed a proclamation commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education ruling.

The second training session was sponsored by the EEOC and was held in Miami, Florida on June 23-25, 2004. Participants at this conference included staff from EEOC and staff from state and local agencies from around the nation. The theme of this session was "Celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1964 Civil Rights Act." Legal updates were presented by attorneys from the EEOC.

The Director and the Assistant Director conducted a workshop on June 8, 2004 for staff of the Office of Consumer Affairs of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS). Information presented during this workshop centered around the operations of CHR.

The Director then discussed House Bill 570, a bill relating to the detention and arrest of illegal aliens and unidentifiable people. After a brief discussion, the Director advised board members to encourage anyone who had concerns about this bill to contact the State Police.

The Director recognized Investigator Snead for conducting a successful mediation that resulted in a settlement agreement totaling approximately \$102,000.00, the largest settlement in the history of the agency. The Director noted that by the end of August, Investigator Snead's caseload could exceed ninety (90) cases unless some of the cases are administratively closed through withdrawals or successful mediations. With this in mind, the Director recognized Investigator Snead for his ability to manage such a large volume of cases with limited resources. She then recognized the entire staff for their professionalism and dedication to ensuring that citizens receive quality services.

The Vice Chairman asked if CHR would benefit from the recent surplus that was identified in the state's budget and if so, could these additional funds be used to reduce Mr. Snead's caseload. The Director indicated that no new additional funds will be made available to CHR.

The Chairman asked if the Director could provide board members with budget information. A brief discussion regarding CHR's budget followed and information from the budget bill was shared with members.

During a discussion of the investigation process, Member Boulter noted that the Council does not have the power to subpoena witnesses and, because of this, in some instances, the Council is unable to obtain needed information for its investigations because potential witnesses refuse to cooperate with the investigation. He thought that an interim solution would be to send a more specific letter highlighting the information witnesses might have that would help the Council complete the investigation. Several members suggested that the Council might want to request legislation that would give the Council the authority to request subpoenas for witnesses (ad testificandum) in addition to the authority it has to request subpoenas for documents (duces tecum). Discussion followed regarding the legislative process and the Director reminded the Board members that the Council is part of the Secretary of Administration's portfolio and must follow the Office of the Governor's directives for drafting and submitting proposed legislation.

### **Chairman's Report and New Business**

The Chairman reintroduced Mr. Guy Horsley, a Senior Assistant Attorney General who has worked in the Attorney General's office for approximately twenty (20) years. Mr. Horsley described the role of the Office of the Attorney General in the investigatory process and commended both of the Assistant Attorney Generals (Ondray Harris and Marty Parrish) who have provided legal guidance to CHR's staff.

The Chairman then gave an overview of the discussions that have occurred regarding Fauquier County's efforts to create a human rights commission. The county's Board of Supervisors has appointed a committee to determine if such an entity is needed. These efforts are the result of discussions that occurred among citizens, the present Chairman and county officials three (3) years ago.

Questions were raised regarding the proposed amendments to CHR's appeal process. The Chairman indicated that he will provide the appropriate information to board members on or before the next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 15, 2004 at 1 p.m. in the conference room of the Virginia Council on Human Rights, 900 East Main Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Submitted by,

Jon Strother  
Chairman

Timothy Wilson  
Recorder